

## IN THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

### Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for identifying a unique electronic mail message in a plurality of electronic mail messages extracted from an electronic mail messaging system, the method comprising:
  - retrieving ~~a message~~ from a mailbox on the electronic mail messaging system a copy of a message, the message including a plurality of message properties;
  - computing a message tag from ~~at least a portion~~ a subset of the plurality of message properties, including a message sender and a message submission time;
  - reviewing a list of message tags stored in a single shared index file, wherein the message tags stored in the single shared index file are computed from ~~at least a portion of~~ respective messages properties of messages retrieved from a plurality of mailboxes associated with multiple electronic mail recipients;
  - determining based upon whether the message tag is found in the single shared index file whether the message is not a duplicate message already stored in a message archive; and
  - storing the message tag in the single shared index file and storing the copy of the message in the message archive if it is determined the message is not a duplicate message;
  - wherein the copy of the message, if stored in the message archive, is retained for a prescribed retention period and is not subject to being deleted prior to expiration of the retention period.
2. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the message tag is computed by concatenating at least two properties selected from the plurality of message properties.
3. (Original) The method of claim 2, wherein the message tag is further computed by applying a hash algorithm to the message tag to form a uniform string, wherein the uniform string has a predetermined length.

4. (Original) The method of claim 3, wherein the hash algorithm is an MD5 hash algorithm.
5. (Canceled)
6. (Canceled)
7. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the index file is stored in a relational database system.
8. (Canceled)
9. (Canceled)
10. (Canceled)
11. (Canceled)
12. (Canceled)
13. (Canceled)
14. (Canceled)
15. (Currently Amended) A system for identifying a unique electronic mail message, wherein the system is external to an electronic mail messaging system, the system comprising:
  - means for ~~reading~~ retrieving an electronic mail message from a mailbox on the electronic mail messaging system a copy of an electronic mail message, the electronic mail message including a plurality of message properties;
  - means for computing a message tag from a ~~least two properties selected from~~ subset of the plurality of message properties, including a message sender and a message submission time;
  - means for comparing the message tag with a list of message tags stored in a single shared index file, wherein the message tags stored in the single shared index file are computed from ~~at least a portion of~~ respective messages properties of messages retrieved from a plurality of mailboxes associated with multiple electronic mail recipients;
  - means for determining based upon whether the message tag is found in the single shared index file that the message is not a duplicate message already stored in a message archive;
  - means for storing the copy of the message in the message archive if it is determined the message is not a duplicate message; and

means for storing the message tag in the single shared index file if it is determined the message is not a duplicate message;

wherein the copy of the message, if stored in the message archive, is retained for a prescribed retention period and is not subject to being deleted prior to expiration of the retention period.

16. (Canceled)

17. (Original) The system of claim 15, wherein the message tag is computed by concatenating the at least two properties to form a first message string.

18. (Original) The system of claim 17, wherein the message tag is further computed by applying a hash algorithm to the message string to form a uniform string, wherein the uniform string has a pre-determined length.

19. (Original) The system of claim 18, wherein the hash algorithm is an MD5 hash algorithm.

20. (Original) The system of claim 15, wherein the index file is stored in a relational database system.

21. (Canceled)

22. (Canceled)

23. (Canceled)

24. (Canceled)

25. (Canceled)

26. (Canceled)

27. (Canceled)

28. (Canceled)

29. (Canceled)

30. (Canceled)

31. (Canceled)

32. (Canceled)

33. (Canceled)

34. (Canceled)

35. (Canceled)

36. (Canceled)

37. (Currently Amended) A system for externally archiving a plurality of electronic mail messages selected from an electronic mail messaging system, the system comprising:

an archive server in communication with the electronic mail messaging system;

a duplicate checker in communication with the archive server; and

an archive message store in communication with the archive server,

wherein when the archive server ~~reads~~ receives a copy of a message from the electronic mail messaging system, a plurality of properties associated with the message are sent from the archive server to the duplicate checker,

wherein the duplicate checker computes a message tag for the message using ~~at least two~~ a subset of the properties, including a message sender and a message submission time, and compares the computed message tag with a single shared index file, wherein the single shared index file stores message tags computed from ~~at least a portion of~~ respective messages properties of messages retrieved from a plurality of mailboxes associated with multiple electronic mail recipients,

wherein if the computed message tag matches an entry in the single shared index file, the duplicate checker indicates to the archive server that the message is a duplicate message with at least same said two message properties as another message already stored in the archive message store, otherwise, if the computed message tag does not match an entry in the single shared index file, the computed message tag is added to the single shared index file,

wherein if it is determined the message is not a duplicate message, the archive server stores the copy of the message in the archive message store;

wherein the copy of the message, if stored in the message archive, is retained for a prescribed retention period and is not subject to being deleted prior to expiration of the retention period.

38. (Original) The system of claim 37, wherein the message tag is computed by concatenating the at least two properties to form a message string.

39. (Original) The system of claim 38, wherein the message tag is further computed by applying a hash algorithm to the message string to form a uniform string, wherein the uniform string has a pre-determined length.
40. (Original) The system of claim 39, wherein the hash algorithm is an MD5 hash algorithm.
41. (Original) The system of claim 37, wherein the archive server reads the message from a mailbox on the electronic mail messaging system.
42. (Canceled)
43. (Canceled)
44. (Canceled)